

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

- 1 1. A method of transferring a file from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a  
2 communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the  
3 communications system, the method comprising:  
4 connecting from the first client to a communications system host;  
5 sending, through the communications system host, a request to the second client to  
6 establish a direct connection to the second client;  
7 when the second client accepts the request, establishing a direct connection to the  
8 second client that bypasses the communications system host; and  
9 transferring a file over the direct connection.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the request is authenticated by the communications  
2 system host.
- 1 3. The method of claim 1, wherein the second client accepts the request based on indicated  
2 preferences of the second subscriber.
- 1 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the direct connection is initiated by the second client.
- 1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the direct connection to the second client is established  
2 using an IP address of the second client.
- 1 6. The method of claim 1, further comprising displaying a graphical user interface indicating  
2 that a direct connection to the second client is established.
- 1 7. The method of claim 1, wherein the communications system host comprises an instant  
2 messaging host.
- 1 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a data file.
- 1 9. The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a text file.

Sub  
A17

006F50"48225560

1 10. The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a graphics file.

1 11. The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises an audio file.

1 12. The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a video file.

1 13. The method of claim 1, wherein the direct connection is a socket connection.

1 14. A method of transferring a file from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a  
2 communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the  
3 communications system, the method comprising:

4 connecting from the second client to a communications system host;  
5 receiving, through the communications system host, a request from the first client to  
6 establish a direct connection;  
7 accepting the request from the first client;  
8 establishing a direct connection to the first client that bypasses the communications  
9 system host; and  
10 receiving a file over the direct connection.

1 15. The method of claim 14, wherein the request is authenticated by the communications  
2 system host.

1 16. The method of claim 14, wherein accepting the request is based on indicated preferences  
2 of the second subscriber.

1 17. The method of claim 14, further comprising initiating the direct connection.

1 18. The method of claim 14, wherein the direct connection is established by the first client  
2 using an IP address of the second client.

1 19. The method of claim 14, further comprising displaying a graphical user interface  
2 indicating that a direct connection to the first client is established.

Sub  
A1

006T50"4826550

1 20. The method of claim 14, wherein the communications system host comprises an instant  
2 messaging host.

1 21. The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a data file.

1 22. The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a text file.

1 23. The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a graphics file.

1 24. The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises an audio file.

1 25. The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a video file.

1 26. The method of claim 14, further comprising receiving an indication that the first  
2 subscriber using the first client is composing a message.

1 27. The method of claim 26, further comprising receiving the message composed by the first  
2 subscriber from the first client.

1 28. The method of claim 14, wherein the direct connection is a socket connection.

1 29. An apparatus for transferring one or more files from a first client associated with a first  
2 subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber  
3 to the communications system, the apparatus comprising a first client configured to:

4 connect from the first client to a communications system host;  
5 send through the communications system host a request to the second client to  
6 establish a direct connection to the second client;  
7 when the second client accepts the request, establish a direct connection to the second  
8 client that bypasses the communications system host; and  
9 transfer a file over the direct connection.

1 30. An apparatus for transferring one or more files from a first client associated with a first  
2 subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber  
3 to the communications system, the apparatus comprising a second client configured to:

4 connect from the second client to a communications system host;  
5 receive, through the communications system host, a request from the first client to  
6 establish a direct connection;  
7 accept the request from the first client;  
8 establish a direct connection to the first client that bypasses the communications  
9 system host; and  
10 receive a file over the direct connection.

1 31. A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium for transferring a file from  
2 a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client  
3 associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, comprising instructions  
4 for:

5 connecting from the first client to a communications system host;  
6 sending, through the communications system host, a request to the second client to  
7 establish a direct connection to the second client;  
8 when the second client accepts the request, establishing a direct connection to the  
9 second client that bypasses the communications system host; and  
10 transferring a file over the direct connection.

1 32. The method of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a disc.

1 33. The method of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a client  
2 device.

1 34. The method of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a host  
2 device.

1 35. The method of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a propagated  
2 signal.

1 36. A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium for transferring a file from  
2 a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client  
3 associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, comprising instructions  
4 for:

5 connecting from the second client to a communications system host;  
6 receiving, through the communications system host, a request from the first client to  
7 establish a direct connection;  
8 accepting the request from the first client;  
9 establishing a direct connection to the first client that bypasses the communications  
10 system host; and  
11 receiving a file over the direct connection.

1 37. The method of claim 37 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a disc.

1 38. The method of claim 37 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a client  
2 device.

1 39. The method of claim 37 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a host  
2 device.

1 40. The method of claim 37 wherein the computer readable medium is a propagated signal.

1 41. A method of communicating between a first client associated with a first subscriber to a  
2 communications system and a second client associated with a second subscriber to the  
3 communications system, the method comprising:

4 connecting from the second client to a communications system host;  
5 establishing a direct connection to the client that bypasses the communications  
6 system host;

receiving an indication to  
and  
receiving the message co  
method of claim 41, wh  
method of claim 41, wh  
method of claim 41, wh  
host.

Sub  
A1 7

Sub A1 7

add A1

[illegible]